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SUPPORT FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Growth in the number of older Australians, along with an increasing prevalence of disability, has seen many older people turn to support services for assistance. According to the ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers, 12% of Australians (2.3 million) were aged 65 years and over in 1998, and 1.2 million of these had a disability. The survey also indicated that 888,000 older people required assistance with common daily activities, because of disability or age.

A major aim of aged care policy is to meet the preference of older people to remain in their homes by providing assistance with activities such as personal care, health care, and household tasks. Government agencies may provide services directly or purchase them from other formal providers. The activities most commonly supported by formal providers were property maintenance, health care and housework. Table 7.17 illustrates the range of activities supported by formal providers and the number of older Australians who received assistance with these activities.

7.17 OLDER PERSONS(a), Formal Assistance by Activity - 1998

	Government	Private non-profit	Private for profit	All receiving formal assistance(b)	All needing assistance
	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000
Activities					
Self care	23.2	7.5	*6.3	35.3	155.0
Mobility	32.7	11.3	9.4	51.1	275.0
Communication	n.p.	—	—	n.p.	28.3
Health care	105.9	14.4	132.2	238.6	376.0
Transport	38.5	18.5	11.9	64.9	453.9
Paperwork	*4.4	**2.1	*4.6	11.0	144.3
Housework	108.1	13.6	59.8	177.5	403.9
Property maintenance	42.5	24.5	234.5	284.9	626.1
Meal preparation	20.0	12.3	*7.6	39.2	142.2
One or more activities(c)	237.5	74.6	350.1	506.7	887.9
All receiving any assistance(d)	..	..	..	853.3	..

- (a) Aged 65 and over, living in households.
(b) Total may be less than the sum of the components as persons may receive assistance from more than one provider.
(c) Total may be less than the sum of the components as persons may need or receive assistance with more than one activity.
(d) Persons receiving formal and/or informal assistance.

Source: Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings, Australia (4430.0).

While a large number of people received help from formal providers, more older people received help from informal providers, such as family members or friends, for most activities. As well as being the most likely source of assistance with personal tasks (self care, communication and mobility), friends and relatives also provided help with a full range of other activities. Table 7.18 illustrates the range of activities supported by informal providers, the relationships of providers to older persons receiving assistance, and the number receiving assistance.

7.18 OLDER PERSONS(a), Informal Assistance by Activity - 1998

Activities	Relationship of informal provider to older person receiving assistance						All receiving informal assistance(b) '000	All needing assistance '000
	Partner		Child		Other relative or friend			
	Female	Male	Daughter	Son	Female	Male		
	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000		
Self care	46.3	33.9	39.4	*7.5	9.3	*3.5	127.4	155.0
Mobility	50.9	47.5	84.6	39.2	55.9	30.3	246.4	275.0
Communication	9.5	*3.1	11.3	**1.8	*5.0	**2.6	25.2	28.3
Health care	65.7	29.7	50.0	16.8	18.4	*3.5	172.6	376.0
Transport	40.8	63.2	132.8	62.1	85.4	58.8	372.8	453.9
Paperwork	36.5	19.4	49.2	17.8	16.7	*5.5	133.7	144.3
Housework	59.5	85.9	90.0	37.8	35.1	10.7	281.0	403.9
Property maintenance	66.8	91.8	77.6	116.7	35.9	114.8	422.4	626.1
Meal preparation	33.6	25.5	38.3	10.7	13.1	*3.1	115.7	142.2
One or more activities(c)	143.2	151.7	222.9	170.6	155.7	171.7	710.9	887.9
All receiving any assistance(d)	..	..	..	..	..	..	853.3	..

- (a) Aged 65 and over, living in households.
(b) Total may be less than the sum of the components as persons may receive assistance

from more than one provider.

(c) Total may be less than the sum of the components as persons may need or receive assistance with more than one activity.

(d) Persons receiving informal and/or formal assistance.

Source: Disability, Ageing and Carers: Summary of Findings, Australia (4430.0).

Of the 853,000 people who received assistance with one or more activities, 59% had some of their needs met by formal providers and 83% were assisted by family members or friends. This illustrates the complementary roles that different providers play in attempting to meet the needs of older people in the community.

The majority of people who required help received some support, but not always as much as they would have liked. The activity for which there was the greatest unmet need was transport.

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